

Douglas High School seniors roll into future at drive-thru commencement

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Graduating senior Janis Faldalen smiles as she walks to her car with her diploma during Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday.

- [Mike Henneke/The News-Review](#)



Tayte Ledbetter, center, prepares to announce the next graduate approaching during Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday.

- [Mike Henneke/The News-Review](#)



Family and friends involved in the Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday didn't miss the opportunity to record the unique event with their cell phones.

- [Mike Henneke/The News-Review](#)



Douglas graduating seniors Madi Hester, left, and Lindsay Lousignont watch other seniors receive their diplomas during Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday.

- [Mike Henneke/The News-Review](#)



As Michelle Thompson, mother of graduating senior Brandon Thompson looks on, Dusty Thompson secures balloons on top of the vehicle used in the Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday.

- [Mike Henneke/The News-Review](#)



One graduate's car included a campaign banner for President Donald Trump during Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday.

- Mike Henneke/The News-Review



Graduating senior William Forrest Fisher enters a waiting car during Douglas High School's drive-thru graduation ceremony on Saturday.

- [Mike Henneke/The News-Review](#)

For graduating senior Janis Faldalen, getting her diploma at a drive-thru ceremony Saturday didn't dim the excitement one bit.

"I thought it wasn't going to happen, but here I am. It's happening. I'm so excited, so happy. I'm really really happy," Faldalen said.

Faldalen, like the other seniors in her class and many around the country, has been studying at home since schools closed for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Faldalen and all the graduating seniors in her class, rolled up in cars, along with family members, in front of the school.

As each graduate stepped out, Tayte Ledbetter, student body president, read the graduate's name and Principal Craig Anderson set each diploma on a table for the

graduate to pick up. The graduate then posed for photos, got back in the car and rolled out to allow the next graduate to move forward.

They gathered next at Riverbend Park, and when all were there, they paraded in their cars to Abby's Pizza.

"I think it's a lot better than going on the stage. I'm really shy," Faldalen said of the ceremony.

Faldalen has adapted well to studying for months at home, too. She said it allowed her to keep her cats company. She was a little upset the senior prank didn't happen this year, though.

She plans to attend Umpqua Community College next year and wants to become a history teacher.

Friends Isaac Stoffal and Brett Perry were a little more disappointed not to have the usual ceremony.

"It's kind of a bummer that we don't have the big ol' UCC building, but it's unique. It's the first time," Stoffal said.

He also said he was sad not as many of his family members were able to attend, since he could only bring a car full.

Overall, though he was feeling pretty good Saturday, "happy to go out into the world and become an electrician."

Perry also wished more family could come.

"But still, it's an exciting day that we've all been working for and the day's here finally, we can all hopefully just have fun and get it over with," he said.

Perry plans to work at Big Foot Beverages for awhile, attend UCC and have a career in wildlife management, possibly working for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife or the Bureau of Land Management.

For Perry, graduation was bittersweet.

"It's pretty sad that we won't get to be around our friends every day, but we'll hopefully still keep in touch and continue on with our lives," he said.

Winston-Dillard School District Superintendent Kevin Miller said the traditional ceremony is missed, but considering the pandemic situation, this was the best they could do right now.

"They're a good group of kids. They've been through a lot with this," he said.

Some have missed classes, and other sports and other activities, but they're tough and resilient, Miller said.

"They'll make the best of it," he said.